

***Franciscan University Presents***  
***Parenting Teens and Young Adults with Biblical Wisdom***  
***With guest, Kimberly Hahn***

***Excerpt taken from***  
***“Legacy of Love: Biblical Wisdom for Parenting Teens***  
***and Young Adults”***  
**by**  
**Kimberly Hahn**

**Teen Rebellion**

*Teens rebel against relationship more than authority.* Rebellion is not caused by hormones, immaturity, or a desire for independence. Rebellion is a person’s heart in conflict with God and God-given authorities, such as parents. It is a refusal to obey. If your teen acts rebellious, work on transforming your relationship rather than abandoning your teen emotionally because of your discouragement. “Discipline your son while there is hope; do not set your heart on his destruction” (Proverbs 19:18).

*Broken relationships in a family are painful.* Pain distracts us and isolates us. Relational pain is as deep as physical pain. We experience a sense of loss — who our child could have been — when we deal with the consequences of his or her actions. Dreams are shattered, with no simple way to return to normal.

We feel disconnected from our teen when trust has been broken. One mother’s agony of the unknown was expressed this way: “I feel like I’m in labor again.” We bring these concerns to the Lord and ask him for wisdom to rebuild trust.

We approach the foot of the cross with our teen in our heart. We relinquish our deepest agony to Jesus. Then God can fulfill his purpose for our pain. He does not want to crush us but to make us like his Son, for our good *and* for the good of our son or daughter.

One mother wrote, “In the midst of the grief of a broken relationship, we have a choice: Will the sadness envelop the day and be the focus of thoughts and conversations? Or will we focus on the good we can do for others around us and consign the child to God? May God keep any root of bitterness from growing.” That is a great way to pray.

Tough love is *persistent* love. In essence we communicate, “You may let go of me, but I will not let go of you. You may not want to be with me, but I will take you with me to prayer.” A great model for this kind of persistent love is St. Monica. Though it took years, her prayers and persistence bore rich fruit in the conversion of her son St. Augustine.

In the midst of this sorrow, we must stay close to our spouse, affirming unity. “Be angry, but sin not; commune with your own hearts on your beds, and be silent” (Psalm 4:4). We help each other guard against sorrow becoming depression, and we resist the temptation to blame each other.

For sorrow results in death,  
and sorrow of heart saps one’s strength.  
In calamity sorrow continues,  
and the life of the poor man weighs down his heart.  
Do not give your heart to sorrow;  
drive it away, remembering the end of life. (Sirach 38:18-20)

*Go to Mary, Undoer of Knots.* Mary untied the knot that our first mother, Eve, made. Through Mary’s fiat, her willingness to serve, she untangled the threads of misinterpretation and mistrust created by Eve’s refusal to serve.

Mary joins us at the foot of her son’s cross. There she surveyed her son’s sufferings and *still* chose faith, love, and hope. In the shadow of the cross, we too can bear our sufferings, trusting God, especially with Mary at our side.

*Can our pain enlarge our capacity to love?* When we feel any kind of pain, we recoil. We withdraw so we are no longer vulnerable; this is only natural. But with relational pain from a child, the Lord wants us to follow the supernatural way of love and remain open and vulnerable. Our suffering can release great grace in our family if we allow it to enlarge our capacity for grace. How?

I prayed for a word picture to illustrate this idea. I considered a barrel, a wineskin, and a womb, but each had a limit to its capacity. Then I thought of a well: The deeper the well, the more water it can hold. Instead of allowing my suffering to leave me empty, I can allow the Spirit to deepen the well of my soul, so he can fill me with more grace.

Just like a well in ancient cultures, a deep soul filled with God’s grace is essential for the life of my family. This became my prayer: Lord, please remove more muck from the bottom of the well of my soul today. Then I can be more of a reservoir of your life-giving water—your grace—for my family.

The Scriptures speak of people digging either wells for water *or* ditches for traps. When someone digs a pit for an enemy, the Scripture warns, *that* person is the one who will be hurt (see Proverbs 26:27a). The difference between digging a well and digging a ditch is the intention of the digger.

How do we guard our hearts from digging a pit rather than a well? No matter how much pain we feel, we must desire our child’s good. He is not the enemy; evil is. We will never receive from our child more pain, suffering, or sin than *we* have inflicted on Jesus. Forgiveness flows from our heavenly Father’s heart, through ours, to others.

When we are bowed down with sorrow, we stay in prayer until God raises us. We do not push away the pain, nor do we live in the depths of the grief of it. We acknowledge, “I don’t see the way to get from where I am to *where I need to be*, but, Jesus, I trust in you!”

Sometimes we walk through the valley of death alongside our child in her pain; sometimes we walk through the pain she is causing us. The essential realization is that Jesus walks alongside us both, guiding us and carrying us.

*Prepare to welcome back a wayward child with forgiveness.* Conversion is Christ’s work, but you and I must cooperate. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father lets his son leave, knowing he will fail and suffer. Is that love? Yes, because the father knows that the pain will lead his son to repentance (see Luke 15:11-32). Has your loving heavenly Father let you experience pain and suffering in order to draw you to him?

When our child’s choices have broken our heart, how do we rebuild trust? We do not offer cheap grace, but we also do not want our child crushed. When there is true repentance, we are thankful. Just as there is joy in heaven with the return of one sinner, there should be joy in our home when we share what God has done. For “the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning: great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

We pray for the grace to parent our teens faithfully, so they may become the men and women God desires them to be.

**Titles Mentioned on *Franciscan University Presents*  
“Parenting Teens and Young Adults With Biblical Wisdom”  
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***Legacy of Love: Biblical Wisdom for Parenting Teens and Young Adults* by Kimberly Hahn. Kimani Press.**

***Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism* by Scott and Kimberly Hahn. Ignatius Press.**

***The Suffering of Love: Christ’s Descent Into the Hell of Human Hopelessness* by Dr. Regis Martin. Ignatius Press.**

***The Truth About Trouble* by Father Michael Scanlan, TOR. St. Anthony Messenger Press.**

***Signs of Life: 40 Catholic Customs and Their Biblical Roots* by Dr. Scott Hahn. Doubleday Publishing.**

***Let the Fire Fall* by Father Michael Scanlan, TOR. Franciscan University Press.**

**All of the above books are available through the Franciscan University Bookstore, 1235 University Blvd., Steubenville, OH 43952, 1-888-333-0381, <http://www.franciscan.edu/bookstore>.**